

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9179

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 27880

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PDIP, FR, CT

SUBJ: FRANCE AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE

1. ON SEPTEMBER 20 AND 21 AMBASSADOR TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE QUANTON AND AN EMBASSY OFFICER CALLED ON QUAI DIRECTOR FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS GEORGY AND ELYSEE SPECIAL COUNSELOR FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS JOURNIAC TO DISCUSS AFRICAN AFFAIRS AND THE SITUATION IN THE CAE. AFTER AMBASSADOR QUANTON HAD DESCRIBED IN GENERAL TERMS THE CURRENT US ATTITUDE TOWARDS EMPEROR BOKASSA AND THE CAE, JOURNIAC COMMENTED THAT ANY APPROACH TO BOKASSA ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD BE FORWARD-LOOKING AND NOT DWELL SPECIFICALLY ON THE GOLDSMITH AND RANDAL AFFAIRS. HE SAID THAT BOKASSA CONSIDERED THE MATTERS CLOSED AND IN FACT PROBABLY THOUGHT THAT HE HAD ACTED RATHER WELL. HE WOULD NEITHER UNDERSTAND NOR TAKE WELL A REPETITION OF OUR GRIEVANCES IN THIS REGARD. AT THE SAME
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TIME, AN APPROACH ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS MIGHT BRING HOME TO HIM THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESS IN THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS OF THE WEST AND THE GREAT INFLUENCE WHICH THE PRESS HAS IN INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION AND, IN THE US, IN EFFECTING CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES.

2. QUAI AFRICAN DIRECTOR GEORGY TOOK A SIMILAR LINE, GOING ON TO NOTE THAT WHILE BOKASSA MIGHT LEAVE A GREAT DEAL TO BE DESIRED (THOUGH HE HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN THE PAST IN SUPPORTING MODERATE POSITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS) WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO DEAL WITH HIM AS WITH OTHER DIFFICULT AFRICAN LEADERS. IF BOKASSA WERE TO BE OUSTED FROM POWER HIS REPLACEMENT WOULD NOT LIKELY BE AN IMPROVEMENT, INCLUDING IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CORONATION, BOTH JOURNIAC AND GEORGY CONFIRMED THAT IT IS THE PRESENT FRENCH INTENTION TO SEND A MINISTER--AS YET UNDETERMINED--TO REPRESENT THE PRESIDENT. GEORGY MADE THE POINT THAT THE CORONATION IS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED A FARCE BY A GOOD SEGMENT OF THE FRENCH POPULATION AND NO TOP POLITICAL FIGURE SUCH AS THE PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER WILL WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH IT SO SOON BEFORE THE FRENCH ELECTIONS. JOURNIAC NOTED THAT GISCARD CAN GET OFF THE HOOK RELATIVELY GRACEFULLY BY CITING THE EC SUMMIT SCHEDULED FOR THE SAME TIME (THOUGH HE ADDED WRYLY THAT BOKASSA IS CAPABLE OF CONVINCING HIMSELF THAT THE EUROPEAN SUMMIT DATES WERE PICKED JUST TO AVOID GOING TO THE CORONATION).

4. JOURNIAC EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE CORONATION
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MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE A FLOP IN TERMS OF AFRICAN HEAD OF STATE PARTICIPATION--SOMETHING BOKASSA SETS GREAT STORE IN. IT IS NOT NOW CERTAIN WHETHER PRESIDENTS BONGO AND HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY WILL ATTEND; IF THEY DO THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE A DOZEN OR MORE AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE PRESENT. HOWEVER, JOURNIAC NOTED THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH A NUMBER OF HEADS OF STATE AND HAD NOT FOUND MUCH ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CORONATION. HE THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE THAT SUMMIT-LEVEL ATTENDANCE MIGHT BE LIMITED TO MALLOUM, MOBUTU, AND AMIN. IF SO, THIS WOULD EMBARRASS AND ANGER BOKASSA WHO MIGHT WELL BLAME FRANCE AND THE US FOR HAVING SABOTAGED HIS BIG DAY. IN SUCH A CASE THERE MIGHT BE TENSE DAYS AHEAD IN OUR DEALINGS WITH THE CAE.
HARLAN

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